

## Inter-agency advocacy event

### Leading Voices: Women's Participation in Displacement

26 Septembre 2018, Palais des Nations, Geneva

#### Moderator

- Ms. Sara Ferro-Ribeiro, IOM

#### Panel members

- Mr. Charles-Antoine Hoffman, Senior Adviser for Community Engagement and Accountability, UNICEF
- Ms. Isadora Quay, Gender in Emergencies Coordinator, Care International
- Ms. Ayo Degett, Research Fellow, Danish Refugee Council
- Ms. Giovanna Federici, Global Camp Management Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council
- Ms. Manisha Thomas, Geneva Representative, Women's Refugee Commission
- Mr. David Preux, Senior Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer, IOM

#### 1. Opening remarks

##### *C. Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*

The Special Rapporteur (SR) highlighted that participation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including of women and girls, is among her key strategic priorities. The SR dedicated her first report to the UN General Assembly on the importance of enhancing the participation of IDPs. Her predecessor's report to the Human Rights Council in 2013 highlighted the situation of displaced women and girls. Agencies should consider vital to continuously take stock of progress made in enhancing women and girls' participation, as well as outstanding challenges to design effective responses. The SR commended IOM and the Women's Refugee Commission for their committed focus on ensuring the promotion of women and girls participation, and particularly for developing a very-much needed toolkit that support Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) practitioners, as critical contribution to enhance their protection environment. This advocacy event is seen as an important opportunity to reflect on the importance of always keeping people at the center. IDPs commonly report infrequent or un-sustained engagement with authorities and other stakeholders; top-down, standardized approaches; inconsistent and inadequate provision of information; and failure to hear or fully reflect their views in decision-making processes. As a result, displaced communities are left angry and frustrated, uncertain about their futures, distrustful of authorities and facing responses imposed on them that do not meet their wishes, expectations or needs. Important steps have been taken over the past decades to improve international and national responses

to the diverse assistance, protection and durable solution challenges faced by displaced women and girls. Yet too often, discussions of these issues and humanitarian response planning fail to recognize and actively engage them. Participation can be improved even in the most challenging in ways that are not cumbersome, difficult or entail risk or significant expense. Voices and concerns of displaced women and girls needs to result in both immediate change and protection measures as well as reflected in broader decision-making processes, including those relating to longer-term return, local integration and settlement elsewhere. This year is marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which calls for the active participation of women in decision-making at all stages of displacement. The SR has focused on forging new commitments and bringing together different agencies and organizations to use the GP 20 as an opportunity to galvanize more collaborative efforts, with the common goal of reducing and resolving internal displacement. The participation of IDPs is one of the four priorities identified in the 3-year action plan, and a fundamental principle which underpins all other priorities - developing laws and policies, improving data and analysis, and addressing protracted displacement through facilitating durable solutions; inviting all agencies to join efforts, the SR then passed the floor to the moderator of the event.

## 2. Panel Discussion

*The moderator: how adequate is the global policy landscape governing accountability, participation and women's meaningful inclusion in humanitarian emergencies in fostering women's participation in forced displacement settings specifically, and how do different activity streams at the global level – on AAP, CWC, the participation revolution, gender equality and GBV prevention - interact on the ground to produce – or not – positive, multiplied effects? What are the coordination challenges and how can we overcome them to avoid competition and duplication and ensure mutually reinforcing, collective approaches?*

UNICEF explained that the humanitarian sector is still far removed from the notion of the participation revolution. The situation is improving but still far from the set objectives. The ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System Study notes that efforts around accountability and participation remain weak. While efforts are being made to use more feedback and complaint mechanisms, little evidence exist to whether feedback is incorporated into the way programmes are designed and implemented. IOM, UNHCR, OCHA and other agencies are taking steps to address issues. UNICEF has undertaken to promote collective approaches at country level, to ensure more coherent actions, with some promising results including in CAR and Yemen. It does not mean to take away the agency level responsibilities, more to see what works in a given context and how humanitarian agencies could approach collectively key dimensions of AAP – information provision, complaint and feedback mechanisms, communication etc. UNICEF noticed that needs and concerns of affected communities don't necessarily align with priorities of organizations; and it is not always clear how problems are being referred. Collective approaches are more cost-effective, and preferred by the affected communities. There are real opportunities to develop collective approaches on how agencies conduct needs assessments, promote participation, collect feedback and complaints, and systematically integrate gender, disabilities, GBV and generate a joint analysis around problems identified. In several countries, UNICEF has changed the way to ask questions to capture more concrete, specific concerns of communities, rather than only looking expected topics that humanitarian organizations usually have.

IOM observed that a great deal of work is being done to change the mindset of non-specialized protection staff to foster more collective responsibility and ability to impact GBV. Some positive changes are being made in relation to AAP and CWC. Progresses have been made also on the provision of information, including in relation to GBV but also PSEA. With the increased attention from agencies and donors, information sharing systems have been multiplying leading to duplications, with parallel information systems being set up in the same location. This situation affects the trust of IDPs, as they are getting lost navigating the various systems put in place by humanitarian agencies in the same location. The setup of collective approaches towards AAP deems urgent. The Women's participation project also revealed that people conceive participation in very different ways from the common definitions found in the humanitarian sector, calling to change out mindset and to look at broader understanding of what is participation. Also, the WP project enabled to gather evidence over the fact that displaced persons are unable to participate in humanitarian interventions unless minimum household needs are being met – hence the critical importance of supporting economic empowerment and livelihoods as part as a strategy to promote active participation. IOM urged agencies finding a better compromise between collective accountability and agency-specific accountability –stressing however that both remain essential. Efforts still need to be made to promote to advise Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) on best practices on information sharing and help the set up collective community feedback mechanisms. When service delivery is problematic, the leadership in country need to have the authority to conduct advocacy work with the HCT and recommend course of action. IOM mentions that the need to secure dedicated resources to strengthen participation, as it is not a modality of project implementation: it is an objective of humanitarian action. IOM concluded that the WP project also highlighted that specific resources are needed to support groups - adolescents, persons with disabilities – as they are often excluded from efforts to increase participation

*The moderator: Looking at the topic of using a people-centered approach, and acknowledging limitations to discuss participation in a global forum, how do women affected by crises experience these different approaches and understand and navigate the meanings attributed to participation? How do they experience activities themselves, and can we effect a cultural change in how we foster participation that departs from the constraints of externally applied models and typologies? The researcher from DRC is invited to present findings research conducted in displacement sites*

DRC enabled a PHD student in Anthropology to conduct a research in displacement sites in South Sudan. The researcher has observed a great discrepancy between global commitments and operational practices. Participation of women and girls should not be looked at in isolation from the broader participation structure in camps. Men and women appeared to be equally excluded from decision making processes in camps. IDPs felt that they were not consulted nor notified before activities start, nor involved into even the smallest decisions – such as the definition of selection criteria. The researcher highlighted two main issues from preliminary findings: first, a significant difference exists between comprehensive global policies and implementation at the operational level. All staff interviewed agreed on the critical importance of participation in humanitarian action; however little evidence existed on how this translated into concrete actions on the ground. For example, in coordination meeting studied, very few had community leaders represented. When present, none of the community leaders took part to the preparation of the agenda, or has seen the agenda prior to the meeting, which made it difficult for them

to get prepared. Community leader's engagement was often left as the last item on the agenda, and often deprioritized. Community level meeting existed and usually had women participating. However, meetings were conducted in English, which made it difficult for women to engage, as few can understand or use this language. Women's presence gave the impression that they were only there to "tick a box". Second, need assessment, FDGs were used frequently by humanitarian partners. Very rarely information was fed back to the community, so they would be able to use it for their own advocacy. The researcher also provided an example of a situation where the opinion of the community was simply disregarded, as not matching the pre-conceived design of a complaint and feedback mechanism. To enter the participation revolution, the humanitarian community needs to better understand what participation means, and how it should translate into actions. It would also require a change of mindset, and acknowledge that people are experiencing their own life, and have valid opinions and suggestions for change. Also, there is a need to further engage communities into ways programmes are designed and adjusted. Currently, there is a real risk of depriving displaced communities of the right to take part in decisions. Concluding, the researcher highlighted the need to co-create projects with communities and opening a meaningful dialogue with them, including to define the best communication strategies, considering also the risk of participation fatigue. Humanitarian agencies should also better understand power relations at play, as it has a direct impact on access to leadership and decision making in camps, and ultimately, on opportunities to enhance participation

*The moderator: Can humanitarian actors develop methodologies that allow us to assess the realistic opportunities and challenges for women to engage in meaningful decision-making, and effectively – but rapidly - analyze how power is manifested and exercised and explore avenues for alternative power brokerage where formal, visible decision-making is inaccessible?*

CARE International discussed the linkages between power and patriarchy, and the impact on women's lives of living in a highly patriarchal world. With women's participation in decision making around the world remaining very low – with 1/5 offices are held by women in the political sphere- how much can we expect women to take a leadership role in the context of an emergency? CARE International suggested steps to drive forward this process, including in rapid onset emergencies. In the first hours on an emergency, a rapid gender power analysis based on secondary data can enable to understand dynamics at play. This can be completed by a social analysis of the composition of humanitarian teams, including staff and implementing partners to reflect on their own power and what it means to work with a gendered perspective. Following these initial steps, activities should be designed with specific efforts being made to collect opinions of women over what is important to them, and what assistance they would like from humanitarian agencies. This implies working directly with women, but also including men and community leaders. The last step consists in designing activities together with the community, looking into reflecting the various needs, and seeking their agreement on how resources will be used. CARE International concludes by observing that simply "mainstreaming" participation of women does not lead to meaningful participation in decision-making. Targeted activities at women are essential to ensure their meaningful participation.

*The moderator: the design of women-focused activities gives rise to questions on how refashioning women as political operatives, economic providers and community agents can affect shifts in gendered social dynamics, and begin to challenge social norms, at the household and community level. But how are these shifts impacted by the engagement of men, and to what degree? Are there broader private and public consequences to women-exclusive efforts, or creating women-only activities and positions? How do we move from engaging men as gate-keepers and permission agents to women's participation, as opposed to partners and supporters?*

WRC observed that the findings from the Women's Participation Project have shown better results when both men and women had been involved in the project. WRC pointed out the need to bring men into the discussion to achieve a change in perspective, at both operational and global level. The audience of the event is composed mostly of women; men need to be brought in the dialogue to ensure a real change of perspective. Reflecting on points raised by previous panelists on the need to understand what women needs and how humanitarian agencies can assist them, WRC pointed the current contradictions that exist in the humanitarian sector. Humanitarian agencies are put under pressure to provide data and prove that they money is spent on time against internal performance criteria, and very little attention given to how well agencies work with communities, driving them away from the possibility to develop people-centered approaches. WRC called for resources, but also a change of mindset to really put people at the center.

UNICEF looked with great interest at aspects related the strengthening self-esteem and self-awareness in the Women's participation project – with some very promising results, though less ambitious than the original objective to affect power dynamics. UNICEF is questioning whether it is really within humanitarian actors' capacities to change social norms considering the short timeframe and scope of humanitarian action. Much efforts are needed to better understand power dynamic, make sure to avoid perpetuating or strengthening harmful practices, however is it really the role of humanitarian agencies to change the society they work in? WRC explained that initially the idea of project was to improve women's participation in camp governance and understand how improved participation would lead to improve their protection environment – including in relation to risks of GBV. Changing social norms was not overall objective of the project, however WRC is convinced that small shifts fostered through humanitarian action could feed into broader and longer term social change supported by development actors. The Special Rapporteur Jimenez-Damary highlighted that the 'do no harm' principle is at the core of humanitarian action, which means to uphold basics right, but also not perpetrating injustice where it exists. Empowering women to effectively participate is also about avoiding entrenching systems of injustice. Little steps get set the path for much greater achievements.

*The moderator: Different displacement settings affect our ability to engage with women differently as well, regarding in and out of camp settings. What factors and conditions are particularly favorable for participation, and what are the obstacles specific to different displacement typologies?*

IOM highlighted that the type of settlement, the type of management and the size of site hosting displaced populations influence opportunities to set up participation structures. While larger planned camps offer easier access to population and usually benefit from a larger presence of humanitarian actors, 70% of displaced population is currently settled outside planned camps, making it even more challenging to

devise coordinated and comprehensive strategies. The size of camps is also an important factor – establishing community participation infrastructures in small, scattered camps, is more challenging than in larger camps. The type of and actor carrying out camp management – humanitarian actor, authorities, military forces - and the security conditions – whether people are able to move outside camps, access services etc. are also key influencing factors. The phase of the camp-life cycle has also an impact – humanitarian actors tend to rush during the set up and closing phase, with community participation taking little space over competing priorities, despite the critical importance of community engagement including during those critical phases

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) elaborated on their experience enhancing participation, including both inside and outside camps. NRC has been working on approaches and tools to enhance community participation, through the development of the Urban Displacement Outside Camp Approach (UNDOC). NRC implemented this approach in various countries - including in Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, NRC partnered with IOM to test and adapt the Women’s Participation Toolkit for outside camps, to complement the UNDOC methodology. While noting similarities with camps and camp-like settings – including in terms of limitations due to cultural practices, influence on existing power structures, NRC noted that humanitarian actors have much limited capacities to develop strategies and act upon issues identified by women outside camps. Tackling issues is much more challenging and requires longer term strategies and changes coming only after long and sustained advocacy efforts – for instance on issues like access to education for girls. NRC however observed that using some of the traditional camp management tools, including setting up community representation structures can have had positive effects. In the case of Afghanistan, it enabled to increase the exchange of information, and the identification of solutions to common issues. Working outside camps with camp management tools however requires adapting strategies - establishing community centers when operating outside camps is of critical importance to create a space where people can meet and discuss, with service providers; it is also essential to multiply and diversify opportunities to participate, and regularly consulting community members on how to increase their ability to make decisions. Even more than in camps, the composition of the team will greatly impact on capacities to reach out to women and girls. NRC concluded that time is also a critical factor – time is needed to understand what the needs are, and how to set up effective strategies to progressively empower women and girls

*The moderator: Tied to this question is the issue of how we effectively collect data and monitor the progress of our engagement – especially when mobility is fluid, sites temporary, and participation manifold in its typologies. What are the risks of our inability to adequately capture data, and how does this limitation inform our appeals for long-term investment in women’s participation?*

CARE international highlighted that currently there are no robust and comprehensive data sets that exist on how women participate; humanitarian agencies certainly face a major challenge and need to invest considerable resources to build evidence on participation. Stressing the current contradiction of a system that became obsessed with data, WRC discussed systems that want to collect data without talking directly to people. WRC called for a meaningful “people-centered” approach, also when it comes to collect data to inform programming.

The researcher from DRC explained that using incentive workers, often members of the affected community, requires investing into their strengthening capacities – agencies often assume that they will become experts in enabling participation from day one and able to collect relevant information without training. Humanitarian agencies also need to question their pre-assumptions and prejudice when collecting data, including on why people chose leaders, why women are not able to participate. Humanitarian agencies need to balance accountability to donors and accountability to people they serve.

## Question and Answer Session

*Question: IOM South Sudan asked the researcher from DRC to elaborate on observations of the barriers for women to participate.*

*Answer:* The researcher observed multiple barriers - invitations not being extended to women, care duties preventing women from participating in meetings; and internal political dynamics. Language was certainly one of the most significant barriers – very few women being able to understand English

*Question: UN Women asked the panel members to share views on ways to ensure sustainability in participation and how they consider the use of financial compensation to support participation?*

NRC highlighted that the use of incentives in camps is always sensitive, particularly when it comes to supporting participation. Paying leaders might create situations where motivation to join would be questionable. The lack of coordination over the provision of incentives in camps is already challenging; WRC highlighted also that humanitarian actors need to be careful with financial compensations. Agencies also need to be aware of power structures. Women’s groups might exist but be excluding specific groups– including persons with disabilities. IOM stressed the importance of mapping all women’s groups, including both formal groups and informal groups and networks that might exist, to devise sustainable strategies to strengthen them. IOM highlighted again the need to ensure better coordination as all humanitarian actors, as they tend to engage with the same group, creating an overload on requests and participation fatigue.

*Question: IOM Somalia asks the panel to elaborate on how to promote participation in settings where access is particularly restricted.*

*Answer:* NRC and IOM highlighted the need to secure dedicated resources and have specialist devise the adequate strategies and strengthen capacities of both staff and community members – particularly in situation where physical access to sites/displacement areas is very limited. CARE international and WRC also mentioned that strengthening women’s participation require specific efforts and dedicated resources – focusing on community participation only might result mostly in men’s participation; UNICEF explained that while dedicated resources and staff are indeed needed, humanitarian actors should be careful to not create a new “niche “that would work independently from the rest of programmes, as participation needed to at the core of all programming



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency

# WOMEN IN DISPLACEMENT

The moderator closes the discussion by thanking the panelists, and reflecting on the fact that while much progress has been made, much efforts remain needed to promote the empowerment of women, girls and other individuals affected by displacement